

**VA****U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

# **News Release**

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The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is marking the 10th anniversary of legislation authorizing it to establish specialized programs for homeless veterans, including treatment and rehabilitation of those suffering from mental and addictive disorders.

"This country's 250,000 homeless veterans, many of whom served in a war zone, now face the daily battles of life on the streets, battles that are fought in poverty and isolation, pain and confusion. In the last 10 years, VA has offered help, opportunity and hope to homeless veterans struggling for their dignity and very survival," VA Secretary Jesse Brown said.

Along with general programs to assist homeless veterans or prevent them from becoming homeless, the legislation enabled VA to develop the nation's largest integrated network of services and programs for the homeless, including outreach and case management, treatment, rehabilitation, transitional residential care, therapeutic work and assistance with permanent housing.

Since 1987, VA has treated and assisted 200,000 homeless veterans. Of those completing VA programs, 40 percent had stable housing, and 40 percent were employed at discharge. On average, homeless veterans served by VA doubled their incomes, and most continue to use VA outpatient programs for the treatment of their medical or psychiatric problems.

In the earliest stages of development of its homeless veterans programs, VA realized the department alone could not meet the varied and multiple needs of homeless veterans.

To increase assistance and extend the continuum of care for homeless veterans, VA forged partnerships throughout the nation with veterans service organizations, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and community-based service providers. The growth in these alliances is reflected, in part, in VA's support for nearly 5,500 transitional and permanent beds for homeless veterans in urban and rural communities throughout the country.

VA also has provided assistance to the homeless through other programs, including a joint project with the Social Security Administration to assist homeless mentally ill veterans, programs with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide permanent or long-term transitional housing to homeless veterans, work-therapy programs in which veterans are compensated and provided therapeutic housing, and a grants program to help eligible organizations providing services to homeless veterans.

In conjunction with the 10th anniversary of dedicated service to homeless veterans, VA has released the report "Heading Home: Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness Among America's Veterans: A Post-Summit Action Report and Resource Directory." It reviews progress since Secretary Brown convened a national summit in February 1994 to receive input from veterans organizations, homeless veterans and representatives of public and private organizations providing assistance to the homeless.

The "Heading Home" report summarizes priorities for action, consensus principles upon which to base intervention strategies, and suggested guidelines for implementation of recommendations from the 1994 summit.

The new report highlights VA achievements since 1987, and details new and proposed initiatives. Copies are

available from Marsha Martin, VA Coordinator of Homeless Initiatives, at 202-273-6284.